Of the Sorts - Backstory

There existed a cult which defied humanity. The leader, who is currently unnamed (well call them Leader for now), wrote a program that overwrites someone's consciousness - their personality, memories, identity, everything - and replaces it with a new person, as well as gives them the ability to control and deteriorate people through their dreams. This program also connects everyone to a "server", one which Leader has full observation over. Leader can't read everyone's thoughts or anything, but when someone actively uses the server to control a new target, Leader is able to see a detailed record of said activity to make sure no one abuses their power or uses it against Leader.

Macy had been experiencing these recurring dreams for a while now. It started when she dreamt of a vast, white world with nothing in it except a lone figure. They were cloaked and wearing what resembled an old diving helmet. She couldn't tell who it was, as they looked like a poorly-scribbled animated sketch. As she approached the figure, an intense gust of wind passed through the area. She was unable to look up due to the harsh winds, and all she could see was the ground leading up to the figure's feet. Starting at said figure's feet, she saw a stream of bright red ink traveling across the ground, blown by the winds. The ink formed an unrecognizable symbol.

With each day, Macy became more and more dissociative. It started with spacing out too frequently and feeling dazed, but eventually progressed to the point where she would black out and wake up in unfamiliar places. One night, she woke up in a downtown area of the city, at the top of a short staircase which led to a basement-level store. This was no store, however, it was seemingly abandoned. Past the entrance, there was a short hallway, pitch-black due to lack of lighting. This hall lead to a larger room whose walls were packed floor-to-ceiling with junk: Old boxes overflowing with cords and wires, computers, unrecognizable electronic innards, etc. To the left was a square platform surrounded by thin metal rods protruding from its corners. To the right was the only source of lighting in the room; a wall of turned-on computers. In front of these computers, typing away, was the figure she had seen in her dreams.

Macy spoke out to the figure, which pulled his attention away from whatever he was working on. He commented that he was expecting her, and introduced himself as Fall. There wasn't any time for explanation, or rather, things would be best left unexplained. She was unable to care about what would happen to her anyway, so she didn't struggle. All that remained of Macy was a foggy mind and an auto-piloted body. Fall draped a cloak around her, bolted a helmet around her head, and connected some wires from the computers to ports in said helmet. Now she looked almost indistinguishable from him, aside from the height difference and the cords.

Fall was supposed to overwrite Macy with Leader's code, however he found this whole setup immoral. Instead, he had been working on some coding of his own for quite some time. On the surface, the code appeared exactly the same as what Leader wrote, however it had one small change: It saved a draft of the consciousness it overwrote deep within the new consciousness. This draft wasn't detectable by the server, but if needed, it could be restored (this restoration WOULD be detectable, though). Consciousnesses could also be transferred if needed, so "killing" the newly created identity wouldn't be necessary if the old one could be revived.

The second Macy was a polar opposite version of herself; spunky and energetic as opposed to first-draft Macy's reserved and timid nature. Because codes were installed onto new members via the parent (for context, someone who catches and overwrites a new member is called their "parent", while the new member is their "child"), Macy would pass on this draft-saving code to any of her children, and those children would pass it on to their children, so on and so forth. Fall aimed to overthrow the invasive nature of Leader and reform the cult into a healthier state of functioning.

And so, Fall and Macy continued their plan in secrecy. Somewhere down the road, their covern was blown (I hadn't planned out how). They weren't aware of this mistake until Leader and their henchmen tracked down the two and "executed them". More specifically, the code making up their new identity was erased from their brain. This was effective on Fall, and he remained in a coma until a new copy of the program was installed. However, the second draft of Macy was saved.

Macy's body remained in a coma as well, but she was still conscious in some sort of world that's been created in her subconsciousness. Specifically, it was a small section of the city she lived in, but everything looked like 3D sketches placed in the same vast white world that appeared in first draft Macy's dreams. Second draft Macy wasn't sure what to do at first, but while walking around, she found first draft sitting at a bus stop.

The two had a conversation, most of which was second draft explaining everything to first draft (since, now that first draft isn't under Fall's control anymore, she's horribly confused and worried). Something first draft said sparked an idea in second draft; an idea on how to get out of there. First draft wanted to go with, but second draft wasn't entirely sure where they would land if they got out, and thought it would be best for her to stay in the subconsciousness. She would return for her once she knew it was safe.

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There was a particular building at the very center of this section of the city being shown in the subconsciousness, a building that was significantly taller than the rest. Macy climbed to the roof of that building, as high as she could possibly get, and started clawing at the sky, tearing it away. The sky was like layers of paper. While tearing the layers away, she lost track of time and passed out. She woke up in the real world, in a new body of her own (she knew this because she knew that Leader kept executed bodies captive until they were rewritten). Because restorations were detectable by the server, Macy was in some rather deep shit. Her location wasn't detectable, thank god, but she knew for sure that Leader was aware of her presence.

I hadn't come up with a thorough ending for this story, but the goal for Macy would've been to rescue first draft's body and revive her somehow. A third draft is introduced towards the end, a.k.a the new Macy that inhabits first draft's body, but I didn't have anything more specific planned. Someday I'll come back and give this one a more thought-out ending.